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SUBJECT: APHSCT TOWNSEND'S NOVEMBER 15 MEETING WITH SAUDI
KING ABDULLAH

Classified By: Ambassador James C. Oberwetter for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: In a meeting with Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (APHSCT) Frances Fragos Townsend at his farm outside Riyadh November 15, the King focused on the multiple threats from Iran. He said he had sent strong messages to President Putin and President Chirac about Iran. When Townsend noted that these countries had commercial interests in Iran, the King said "they have interests here as well." Speaking of the nuclear threat, the King said only the US has the capability of dealing with Iran, and that the President should take action before the end of his Administration. On counterterrorism cooperation, Prince Muhammad bin Nayef briefed on efforts to stand up a Facilities Security Force. Townsend said the US will cooperate and support KSA equipment and training requirements. The King instructed Prince Muhammad to follow up. Townsend raised the need to establish a Charities Commission. When Prince Muhammad explained that it remained tied up in the Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of Ministers, Townsend urged action - this commission was announced four years ago, and its absence has become an issue, she said. The King in turn asked the US to be more forthcoming in supporting an international counterterrorism information center, expressing some displeasure with the idea of a regional center in Bahrain. He concluded that friends must talk to each other in this fashion. The dynamics of this meeting were particularly relaxed and warm, reflecting APHSCT Townsend's prior visits and meetings with the King. End Summary.

¶2. (S/NF) APHSCT Townsend met the King at his estate outside Riyadh where he honored her Saudi-style by seating her next to himself at a large banquet. During the hour-long dinner the King engaged Townsend in private discussion. Following the dinner, the King, joined by Prince Muqrin, Director of the General Intelligence Presidency, Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, Assistant Minister of Interior for security affairs, and Prince Badr, brother of the King and Deputy Commander of the National Guard, moved with Townsend, the Ambassador, and her delegation to a private room for a foreign policy discussion. Advisor to the Royal Court Adel Jubair served as the interpreter.

¶3. (S/NF) The King began the discussion by saying he hoped POTUS would visit Saudi Arabia. The King then reflected on his recent visit to Saudi Arabia's southern provinces of Jizan, Abha, and Najran. He said he was pleased to meet all the people and was thankful that they seemed content. The new projects being launched will make them even happier, he observed. The problem, he continued, is finding contractors to implement all the planned infrastructure projects. A large number of tenders don't get adequate bidders; with little more than one month left in the fiscal year, many funded projects have yet to be started. The King said he has

even asked the Chinese to provide contractors. He recalled that in the 1980's Korean contractors did good work and voiced that he should approach them as well. When he visited Korea in 2003, the Korean President showed up skyscrapers in Seoul and said "all these buildings are a consequence of companies who have experience in your country." The Koreans are the best of laborers, he concluded.

14. (S/NF) The King then asked Muhammad bin Nayef about the status of new prison construction. Prince Muhammad reported that five new prisons are being constructed - in Riyadh, the East, Jeddah, Asir, and Qasim Provinces. "May God spare us their evils," the King said. The King then motioned toward Princes Muqrin and Muhammad, saying they are getting along fine. He told Townsend that initially she had one friend - Muhammad bin Nayef - but now she also has a friend in Prince Muqrin.

15. (S/NF) Returning the conversation back to prisons, the King said they need new facilities to handle the problems emanating from Iraq. Townsend said we need enhanced police and internal security force training in Iraq. The King said he hoped Iraq would get the leadership it needed, but he doubted it. Townsend replied that one of the major problems in Iraq is efforts by certain neighbors to destabilize Iraq. The King nodded, adding one word, "Iran." The King estimated that four to five million Iranians had infiltrated into Iraq over the years and suspected that there are some areas in Iraq where Persians are posing as Iraqis. The King said the US has a good ambassador in Iraq. He said he feels the same about the US ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

16. (S/NF) Turning to foreign policy, the King said he has sent a strong message to Russian President Putin and to "our

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friend" President Chirac on Iran. The King firmly said that while those countries may have commercial interests in Iran, they probably have greater commercial interests here in the Gulf. The King stressed that Iran is currently the source of all the problems in the region, from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, and that the problems will get worse over time. The King also urged US to focus attention on Lebanon, noting that the US made commitments to provide assistance to the Lebanese Army but has not delivered. When Townsend committed to taking the issue back, the King said that he had faith and confidence in her ability to convey this to the President.

17. (S/NF) Muhammad bin Nayef added that for three years now Iran has sheltered a son of Bin Laden. He said the MoI had contacted their Iranian counterparts in the past, sent an official to Geneva and asked them to hand him over as a Saudi national. They refused to do it, he said..

18. (S/NF) The King noted that when considering Iran, he asks why Tehran wants a nuclear capability and against whom would they use it. He fears that if Iran gets nuclear capability, all the other major countries in the region will seek it as well. Townsend said counter-proliferation is a key goal of the President's and noted that it is not a concern unique to the US but rather requires the International Community to resolve. That's true, replied the King, but only the US has the capability of stopping Iran. Townsend said each of our partners has some capability to add their leverage to the counter-proliferation effort. The King cited the example of North Korea: while negotiating, it developed nuclear weapons. This is the price for waiting, the King stressed. If Iran is not dealt with during the President's administration, he concluded, the price for the next administration will be unbearably high.

19. (S/NF) On US-Saudi counterterrorism cooperation, Muhammad bin Nayef briefed that the MoI had just begun constructing a training academy for the Facilities Security Force. The goal was to recruit and deploy 35,000 personnel within the next

2-3 years. Townsend said the US wants to cooperate and support this effort by providing equipment and training assistance. The King directed Muhammad bin Nayef to follow up. Townsend added that she would visit oil facilities at Ras Tanura the next day. At this point, the King described his visit to the Shayba oil field, with its difficult airfield landing strip. He suggested that Townsend visit this place as well. (Townsend committed to visit Shayba during her next trip to the Kingdom in early 2007).

¶10. (S/NF) Townsend said there has been tremendous joint work on the operational counterterrorism side. The MoI capabilities have improved, and we are now preempting attacks. The King replied that he has heard of and appreciated Townsend's strong and supportive public statements. "We know what people say in the US thanks to Muqrin's people." Townsend, however, iterated the importance of establishing the Charities Commission and pressed the King on this issue. Muhammad bin Nayef explained to Townsend that the SAG needs to pass a law establishing the Commission, but that the Council of Ministers' legal affairs committee has legal concerns with a government entity supervising private charities. Legally speaking, a non-governmental body would be best, with some government oversight, according to Muhammad bin Nayef. The King instructed Muhammad bin Nayef to ensure that the supervisory body be non-governmental.

¶11. (S/NF) Townsend explained that what is needed is a governmental regulatory commission to set the rules and standards. She appreciated that the King had tried to stopped transfers to charities outside the Kingdom during this period of study but that as we have seen, the charities have found ways around this rule. And it has been almost four years since the announcement of a charities commission, and the absence of such a commission has become a credibility issue in and of itself. The King agreed. Muhammad bin Nayef said we will work together, and added that Saudi Arabia had done more than many other countries in the region. Townsend said she doesn't disagree that SAG has made good efforts, but that the charities commission is an open issue. She stressed that it is a source of embarrassment and frustration in the USG. "You raised it because it is in our interest," concluded the King.

¶12. (S/NF) The King then said perhaps the US could be more forthcoming on one issue - support for the establishment of an international center for counterterrorism information, a proposal made at the Riyadh Conference. Townsend said the latest news she had was that it was agreed to establish a regional center in Bahrain. The King said, &Bahrain

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doesn't have money, it can't do anything at all. What about the UAE? Jubair interpreted this as follows: "This effort seems to have stalled over financing. Bahrain is a small country." The King then stressed that for counterterrorism, information is the most important element, and such a center could help information flows and law enforcement efforts.

¶13. (S/NF) The King concluded the meeting noting he still has hope for the counterterrorism center, and that friends have to talk with each other in this fashion.

¶14. (U) APHSCT Townsend has cleared this cable.
OBERWETTER